



## Lyndale Neighborhood Association Community Participation Program 2011 Annual Report

### 1. Accomplishments

During 2011 LNA was able to continue our work of engaging a broad swath of community members during the year and was able to focus on building two programs that are designed to serve the community for years to come.

LNA's major accomplishments over this time were:

- The successful start up of the Lyndale Women's Leadership Program. The Lyndale Women's Leadership Program works with cohorts of Latina and Somali women over a seven to nine month period on an intensive leadership development experience. Each cohort meets for 15 to 20 sessions that include knowledge building, skill building, and a community project. This program is providing LNA with the opportunity to help community members build their own capacity while helping LNA increase the neighborhood's social capital.
- Starting in the fall of 2011 LNA begin offering an ESL program two nights a week at Zion Lutheran Church. Over the past several years, an ESL program in the neighborhood has been among the most requested items in our discussions with our Latino and Somali community members. The class is unique in that it is designed to connect the students to each other and the larger community.

The ESL Program is helping LNA to build lasting connections within our Latino and Somali communities, while helping community members increase their individual capacity.

- Launched the new [Lyndale.org](http://Lyndale.org), LNA's new website is designed to become the online gathering place for the neighborhood and includes information from many of LNA's community partners, the City, and community members. The site is integrated with LNA's constituent management system, which helps LNA keep people's contact information up-to-date, and allows the neighborhood to connect with people about the issues they are interested in. In it's first year the site saw a 63 percent increase in traffic and a 210 percent increase in page views over the previous year. During its first year [Lyndale.org](http://Lyndale.org) published approximately 500 stories about what's happening in the neighborhood.
- LNA continued our strong history of successful community events. This included the Lyndale Open House, Fish Fest, La Posada, Dia Del Nino, garden tour. During this time we added the Lyndale Home Tour and additional concerts in the park as part of our partnership with Hosmer Library.
- LNA continued our strong efforts to keep the neighborhood informed about what's going in the neighborhood and how community members can be involved through the Lyndale Neighborhood News and LNA's three electronic newsletters.

The impact of LNA's work was that community members had the information, support, encouragement, and resources they needed to be actively involved in shaping the direction of their neighborhood.

## 2. 2011 CPP Submission

Outreach and engagement remained central to LNA's work during this time. The primary filter LNA uses when deciding what to work on as a neighborhood is whether or not something builds community. Some highlights from the previous year in this area are:

### Communication

- LNA received the Gold Level Award from Neighborhood's USA for the Lyndale Neighborhood News in both 2011 and 2012. This is the highest level award a neighborhood can receive for its publications from NUSA.
- LNA continued to expand distribution of our three electronic newsletters (Lyndale E-News, which is our general electronic newsletter; Lyndale Gives Back, which is our volunteer newsletter; and Lyndale Business Matters, which is targeted towards neighborhood businesses.
- The launch of [Lyndale.org](http://Lyndale.org) provided a new way for community members to stay informed about what is happening in the neighborhood and how they can be involved.

### Community Events

LNA provided a myriad number of ways for community members to get to know each other and build social capital in the neighborhood. LNA's events regularly draw hundreds of community members together throughout the year, which provides people with the opportunity to interact with each other on a regular basis. LNA continued to be the primary driver of community events in Lyndale, taking responsibility for leading the planning for the Lyndale Open House, La Posada, Dia Del Nino, and Fish Fest, which are the largest community events in Lyndale each year.

### Direct Service

LNA has continued to build the capacity of our direct service programs in ways that are designed to engage community members and help them increase their personal capacity, which is an important element in LNA's efforts to increase the neighborhood's human resources. This included starting the new Lyndale ESL Program, which is helping non-English speaking community members increase their English language skills and get more involved in their community.

LNA also continued to build our Women's Leadership Program, which is helping cohorts of Latina and Somali/East African women develop their leadership skills through an intensive leadership development program.

### Successes

There are many things LNA has done over the past year to engage community members, the most successful thing we have done is to use a mix of techniques to try and reach community members. This includes using electronic, online, and traditional organizing techniques to try and reach out and connect with community members in ways that encourage them to get involved in their neighborhood. We also continue to get positive feedback from community members who get involved because they see volunteer opportunities listed in the newspaper and electronic newsletters.

## Challenges

The biggest long-term challenge that LNA is seeing in engaging community members is the reluctance of people to make long-term commitments, particularly to LNA's Committees. It has been much easier the past few years to get people involved in short-term projects. The difficulty with this is that having people involved in committees, where they work on specific issues over a long-period of time is often more valuable to the neighborhood, because people are able to develop their skills and take a long-term approach to the organization's work.

Another challenge is that Lyndale has a highly mobile population, both in-terms of our ethnic communities, renters, and families with growing children. All of these groups tend to leave the neighborhood in fairly high percentages, which adds to the challenge of successfully engaging people over a long-term period of time.

The other major challenge facing LNA is the lack of funding and support from the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County. The decline in financial support for neighborhoods is driving a culture that seems to relegate the work of neighborhoods and community engagement to the back burner.

### 3. *Stakeholder Involvement*

Reviewing your submission for CPP funds for 2011, how did you reach out to and involve under-represented communities? Did you find any strategies to be particularly successful?

#### Additional Information

A. How many people currently serve on your board? Are there vacancies?

The LNA Board has 11 regular members and room for up to five alternates. During 2011 the LNA board had 11 regular board members.

B. Approximately how many individuals have participated in committee meetings in the last year?

LNA has a plethora of committees with a variety of meeting schedules that range from monthly, to quarterly, to an as needed basis. LNA's current list of regular committees include: Board; Environment; Crime & Drug; Housing, Planning, and Development; Lyndale Neighborhood Business Association (LNBA); Youth & Parks; and Volunteer.

LNA also uses committees to plan and organize community events like the Lyndale Open House, La Posada, and Fish Fest. We also hold a monthly General Membership meeting that is open to all community members. Altogether, there were approximately 130 to 170 people different people who participated in committee activities last year.

C. How many people attended your annual meeting?

LNA's Annual Meeting is held in June each year and regularly draws between 40 and 60 people.

D. How many households regularly receive your publications (such as newsletters or newspapers)?

LNA has a comprehensive set of print and electronic publications, that include the Lyndale Neighborhood News, which is our award winning monthly community newspaper with a circulation of 4,000 and is mailed to every business and residence in the neighborhood. LNA also regularly publishes three electronic newsletters that include the Lyndale E-News, which is a general information newsletter that is emailed to almost

800 people one to two times a month; Lyndale Gives Back, which is a monthly newsletter for LNA volunteers that is emailed to 330 people once a month; and Lyndale Business Matters, which is a monthly newsletter for Lyndale businesses that is emailed to 200 business.

- E. Approximately how many people participate in other activities of the organization?  
Our best estimate on the number of people who participate in all of our activities (committees, events, programs, etc) is somewhere between 1,200 to 1,500 community members.

#### Underrepresented Communities

Much of LNA's work during 2011 was focused on reaching out to traditionally underrepresented communities. To reach out to our Latino and Somali/East African community members we made sure we had two organizers who were linguistically and culturally competent to help us navigate cultural barriers and engage our community members. This supported the work of the Women's Leadership and ESL programs as well as our multi-lingual communication efforts. We also continued to organize culturally oriented community events like La Posada and Dia Del Nino.

Another way we reached out to underrepresented communities was our use of fun social gatherings, community events, and social media to reach out to young renters.

#### Successful Strategies

What LNA has found over the previous few years is that in order to cut through the clutter of today's modern world the best way to reach people is to use multiple strategies to reach people with information and opportunities that are tailored to where they are at in life.

LNA uses a wide range of organizing techniques to encourage people to get involved in the different aspects of the organization's work. These include: doorknocking, flyering, phone calls, mailings, emails, one on one visits, and extensive communication efforts. All of these efforts are designed around trying to find ways to build connections between community members so they are being invited and engaged in multiple ways from multiple sources.

#### 4. *Financial Reports*

Please provide an income and expense report for your organization for the year. (Please include all funding sources).

**In addition to your annual report, please take time to describe your interactions with City departments and other jurisdictions.**

1. *Impact*

What interactions occupied a major part of your time? What worked well, what could be improved?

A majority of LNA's interactions with the City during this time period were related to planning the reconstruction of Nicollet Avenue. The process had a rough start, with the City not seeming to have a clear process for how to organize a project of this scope and depth of interest. Over time it grew into a good relationship, with LNA working well with both Public Works and CPED staff.

We spent a considerable amount of time working with the Council Member's office. LNA has a good relationship with both our Council Member and her staff. A major reason why we work so much with the Council Member's office is that the rest of City staff are so much more responsive when the Council Member's office is involved than when they are not.

We also worked a lot with the Police Department, which includes working with the CPS, Inspector, Sector Lieutenants, and City Attorney. Being able to have multiple contact points at the department helps us connect with the right person at the right time.

One of the challenges in working with the City is that is an incredibly insular organization that very often tends towards group think and has a reluctance to take action or innovate unless the City Council is on board. There is also reluctance among many City Staff to work with community members, in a way that comes across as if the City is theirs and not the community members who live and work in it. This often comes to light in how difficult it can be to get information and calls back from different parts of the City. This can be incredibly frustrating from a neighborhood perspective where we spend all day, every day trying to get people involved in Minneapolis' civic life.

*City Communications – effectiveness*

Is the information that you receive from the City understandable and useful?

Not really. Most of the communications that come from the City are written in City Speak, which means they have the legally required information written in a way that a lay person will rarely understand ~ this is particularly true of development notices. The materials are also often only in one language irrespective of who actually lives in the area being impacted.

Another issue is that over the past couple of years there has been an increasing drive to notify the neighborhoods of almost everything, which is a good thing, but this means we are often inundated by emails and notices on a very wide range of issue that are often of minimal relevance to our organizations. This can make it very difficult for organizations with small staffs of generalists to respond in a meaningful way. It is also so rare that the City changes any of its policies or submissions based on public input that it is rarely worth the time to push the boulder up the hill.

2. *City Communications – timeliness*

Do you receive adequate notice of City activities in your neighborhood? If not, did your organization inform somebody at the City of this? Did the City respond in a positive manner? Please explain.

Yes and No, We always receive the required notices that are legally governed in the manner proscribed by law. Whether or not this is enough time to properly respond depends on the project and where it falls during the month, since our organization's schedule is generally governed by a monthly schedule – which is what lets it work for our volunteers.

On issues that aren't governed by legal requirements, whether or not we have received notice in a timely manner usually depends on whether the Council office has been involved in the issue and whether they know it would be of interest to us.

#### *City Departments*

How can City departments improve the way in which they function in your neighborhood?

It needs to start with the City making meaningful community engagement a core part of every City employees' job description. This means people need to be trained and evaluated on how they should interact and engage with community members for their job.

There also needs to be a cultural shift among the City's elected officials that values neighborhood organizations and the work we do.

#### 3. *City Assistance*

How can the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department improve the assistance it provides to your organization as a citizen participation group?

The most important thing the Department can do is to become an outspoken advocate for neighborhood organizations within the City, including becoming an advocate for more funding for neighborhood organizations. At this point we have yet to see the department effectively engage neighborhoods around funding or any other issue relating to our work with the City.

*Other comments?*